

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM OUTCOMES GUIDE: VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

Center for Quality Special Education:

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COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE GUIDES

1. Why were the Guides developed?

The Program Outcomes Guides are a natural response to the continuing desire of parents and professional educators to know that they are preparing a handicapped child to participate effectively in an adult community. This effort is further complicated by the variety of impairments, the need to make necessary educational accommodations, the need to teach those things that are intuitive for many, and the limitations imposed by societal attitudes. For the teacher of a student with an impairment, many questions arise. What does the child need to be able to do to function effectively? Where is the child now? Where can the child be? Am I, as the child's teacher, focusing my efforts in the appropriate directions?

Over the years, the Department has been asked and has tried to provide leadership in this area through various undertakings. More recently, the Center for Quality Special Education (CQSE) was asked to develop Program Outcomes Guides based upon a consensus among knowledgeable professionals and parents about what students should be able to do to function effectively and what outcomes are especially important for the student who manifests a particular impairment. The Guides should also serve to assist local, intermediate, and state offices in further efforts to develop curricula and better systems of service and professional development.

The Guides were not developed to address "best practices" or to set minimum standards that all students must achieve. Instead, they are a vehicle to provide direction and communication. They provide direction as a compass might, but they are not maps because the routes taken are functions of the interaction among child, family, school, and society. They also provide a means to communicate the purpose and direction of special education to parents, general educators, adult service agencies, and others who are interested in the particular special education population.

2. How are these Guides different from what we have already been doing?

The Guides do not present much that is new in terms of content. Special education teachers who have taught in the field during the past five years are likely aware of the content. However, the Guides do provide a much improved, and widely accepted, frame of reference for organizing existing information. There are four features of the Guides that characterize their uniqueness and value to special educators.

- The Guides provide a broad perspective on the unique educational needs of students who are served in Michigan's categorical special education programs. Whereas many teachers focus on one or more of the outcomes, the Guides provide a mechanism for continuous review of the larger set of outcomes which are unique to special education services.
- The Guides provide a long range focus for all levels of elementary and secondary education. The On-Target Abilities (in the case of VI and HI programs) provide the early elementary educator and the late secondary educator with a common perspective on where the program should be heading. Without dictating what should be taught or how, the Guides give teachers at all levels a consistent context around which they can design their instructional activities.



DONALD L. BEMIS
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Memorandum

To: State Directors of Special Education
From: *Lucian* Lucian Parshall, Senior Consultant
Special Education Services
Subject: Special Education Outcomes Project

* * * * * ACTION

Over the past three years, the Michigan Department of Education has been creating educational outcomes for its twelve impairment areas. Each outcome guide is developed over a twenty-four month period by approximately 300 individuals representing, school districts, organizations, legislature, parents, and agencies, through a grant to the Center for Quality Special Education (CQSE).

The materials produced for each impairment area include an outcome guide, which identifies several exit criteria; a teacher checklist, which catalogs the outcomes by age clusters; and a performance assessment instrument, which is used to determine the student's ability level just prior to exiting the system.

Materials have been completed for the visually impaired, hearing impaired, and severely mentally impaired. In addition, the areas of speech, educable mentally impaired, and emotionally impaired will be finished by the end of this year. For informational purposes, I have included examples of our visually impaired outcomes and our hearing impaired performance checklist. If you wish to order any material, there is a form in the back of the checklist.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (517) 335-0460, or FAX at (517) 373-7504.



- The Guides provide a common frame of reference for communicating the unique features of specific special education programs and services to the wide range of persons who need to know the purpose and goals of special education. The list of persons is long and often complex as many professionals enter and sometimes exit the educational process. Among them are parents, general education teachers, specialists (such as Occupational or Physical Therapists, Orientation and Mobility specialists, social workers, school psychologists, licensed psychologists, optometrists, and many others), advocates, school administrators, and school aides.
- The Guides also contain an assessment strategy for determining progress toward achievement of the outcomes. Each assessment strategy is unique to the particular categorical area, but is always focused on skills, behaviors, or experiences that students should be expected to demonstrate or attain at particular age (grade) levels. The assessment strategies provide the performance indicators for determining progress toward the outcomes.

3. Is this a curriculum?

No! The Guides contain the context and the focus for curriculums, but curriculums go much further to provide the locally determined plans for getting to the outcomes. There are many ways to achieve the outcomes elaborated in the Guides. At this time, we do not know which are the most effective or efficient curriculums. All programs will need to look at their current curriculum to determine if it actually reflects the focus of the outcomes.

Curriculums contain much more than what is included in the Guides. Curriculums include the documented scope and sequence of instruction. The scope identifies the boundaries within which the program will operate. The sequence of instruction identifies the knowledge, skills, and behaviors critical to reaching the outcomes. The Guides, on the other hand, only contain the outcomes and samples of behaviors that best reflect when students are on target for reaching the outcomes.

4. Is the State going to make us use these Guides?

The State Board of Education formally "received" the first three Guides (VI, HI, SMI) on October 17, 1989. After one year, during which time the COSE will monitor field input regarding the outcomes, the Guides will be resubmitted to the Board for "endorsement." Whether or not districts actually use the Guides and accompanying assessment strategy will be locally determined.

5. What if students "fail" the outcomes?

First of all, the outcomes should not be confused with any type of minimum competency. This is not a statewide testing program, nor is it a strategy for monitoring school compliance.

Passing or failing the outcomes is not the relevant focus. The relevant focus is on determining effectiveness with students (both individuals and groups), given the widely varying approaches to education that districts may take. Students cannot "fail;" instead, they only perform below, at, or above expectation. When whole groups of students perform below established expectations, the schools must become introspective, systematically reviewing their structure and programs. Perhaps different efforts are needed, such as additional resources, revised curriculums, reorganization of services, or different teaching strategies, materials, and procedures. There are many possibilities.

6. What resources are needed to fully implement the concepts contained in the Guides?

The answer depends upon many factors. At a minimum, districts should appoint a committee (including a supervisor and some teachers) to carefully review the content of the Guides. They may even wish to complete several assessments (see the assessment strategy) to determine how well students are performing on the outcomes at various age levels. They should discuss how the current curriculum may or may not be lending itself to achievement of the outcomes. The committee should report back to the district and the school board regarding concerns for achieving the outcomes. These concerns should include organization of services, curriculum needs or additions, resource allocation, etc.

Depending on the school's current curriculum, organization of services, resources, etc., the "resources" necessary for full implementation can be minimal (one committee responding with an "all seems ok") or quite massive in cases where the schools feel a need to completely reorganize services and curriculum materials.

7. Will a state model special curriculum be developed to accompany the outcomes?

Historically, the responsibility to develop curriculums rests with the school districts. There is no current plan to change this direction. It is possible that Michigan Department of Education, Special Education Services will assist districts in their development of curriculum. At this point in time we do not know whether or not our current curriculums do, in fact, lend themselves to outcome achievement. Not until districts use the Guides for some time will we be able to understand how best to achieve the outcomes.

03/27/90

OVERVIEW OF THE OUTCOMES

Category 1: Basic Academics

- 1.1 Students complete local school minimum graduation requirements.
- 1.2 Ability to use low vision and blindness materials and techniques to solve problems requiring basic mathematical skills (+, -, x, ÷, geometry).
- 1.3 Ability to use measurement tools and read/interpret (adapted) graphic maps, globes, gauges, graphs, diagrams, and charts in primary learning medium using low vision and blindness techniques.
- 1.4 Ability to communicate through creating written/printed material.

Category 2: Maximizing Use of Sensory Abilities

- 2.1 Knowledge of personal visual loss and functioning.
- 2.2 Knowledge of assistive devices, techniques, and resources for maximizing visual efficiency.

Category 3: Accessing Information in Inkprint

- 3.1 Technical ability for sustained reading at the 7th grade level using Braille or inkprint.
- 3.2 Knowledge of services, agencies, and organizations that are available to people with visual impairments and the ability to obtain books and personally useful services.

Category 4: Competence in Orientation and Mobility

- 4.1 Technical ability to move about in one's living, neighborhood, community, and work environments.
- 4.2 Technical ability to use all major forms of public transportation.
- 4.3 Technical ability to travel to specified destinations in an unfamiliar community of at least moderate size (approximately 50,000) and return to point of beginning.
- 4.4 Ability to locate and read survival symbols in order to access public places (elevators, rest rooms, restaurants, etc.).

Category 5: Productivity

- 5.1 Ability to set goals, organize tasks toward meeting goals, and carry out plans commensurate with personal, daily living, or work (employment) needs.
- 5.2 Ability to articulate a realistic vocational/career goal or vocational education plan.

Category 6: Personal Management

- 6.1 Ability to manage daily living tasks using established low vision and blindness techniques.
- 6.2 Ability to manage eating and other personal care needs using established low vision and blindness techniques.
- 6.3 Ability to participate in active leisure or recreation activities.
- 6.4 Competence in the practical skill areas: telephone usage, time, and money skills.
- 6.5 Knowledge of proper prevention of and procedures for responding to emergencies.
- 6.6 Demonstrates a well-developed knowledge of self.

Category 7: Social and Interpersonal Relations

- 7.1 Ability to effectively interact socially with others and to communicate one's thoughts to enable constructive daily living interaction.

Three years ago the State of Michigan embarked upon a unique project to conceptualize and measure the benefits of education for students who receive special education services. These benefits constitute the core of the expected outcomes for students with particular impairments and educational handicaps. Entitled **Outcome Indicators for Special Education**, the project represents a long term commitment to move special education into the year 2000. Between now and then, this project is expected to impact upon the education of every handicapped student in the State of Michigan. It is an important programmatic thrust for Michigan with a strong commitment from the State Board of Education as well as special educators throughout the state.

The purpose of this presentation is to explain the Outcome Indicators for Special Education Project in Michigan. In doing this, I will address the reasons why Michigan began moving in the direction of student outcomes, differentiate between outcome expectations for students and other important outcomes of education, review the theoretical basis for the project, describe the various documents that communicate to teachers and parents relevant outcome information and how those documents were developed, and describe ways the information is currently being used in the field.

Overview of the project

At this time, the project has six objectives for each impairment area recognized in Michigan. They include the following:

1. **To identify and define the expected outcomes of special education programs.**

Visual impairment:	Completed	Learning Disab:	Winter '91
Hearing Impairment:	Completed	Autism:	Winter '91
Severe Mental Imp:	Completed	Preprimary Imp:	Spring '91
Educable Mental Imp:	Completed	Train. Mental Imp:	Fall '91
Emotional Imp:	Completed	Physically Impaired:	Fall '91
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Completed	Severe Multiple Imp:	Fall '91

2. **To develop a K-12 strategy for assessing student progress toward the outcomes.**

Visual impairment:	Completed	Learning Disab:	Winter '91
Hearing Impairment:	Completed	Autism:	Winter '91
Severe Mental Imp:	Completed	Preprimary Imp:	Spring '91
Educable Mental Imp:	Fall '90	Train. Mental Imp:	Fall '91
Emotional Imp:	Fall '90	Physically Impaired:	Fall '91
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Fall '90	Severe Multiple Imp:	Fall '91

3. **To train Michigan educators on the importance and use of the outcomes.**

Visual impairment:	In process	Learning Disab:	Spring '91
Hearing Impairment:	In process	Autism:	Spring '91
Severe Mental Imp:	In process	Preprimary Imp:	Fall '91
Educable Mental Imp:	Fall '90	Train. Mental Imp:	Winter '92
Emotional Imp:	Fall '90	Physically Impaired:	Winter '92
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Fall '90	Severe Multiple Imp:	Winter '92

4. **To develop an Exit Performance Assessment (EPA).**

Visual impairment:	Completed	Learning Disab:	Not Sch.
Hearing Impairment:	Not Sch.	Autism:	Not Sch.
Severe Mental Imp:	Not Sch.	Preprimary Imp:	Not Sch.
Educable Mental Imp:	Fall '90	Train. Mental Imp:	Not Sch.
Emotional Imp:	Fall '90	Physically Impaired:	Not Sch.
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Not Sch.	Severe Multiple Imp:	Not Sch.

5. **To construct a statewide profile from a sample of student based on the EPA.**

Visual impairment:	Completed	Learning Disab:	Winter'91
Hearing Impairment:	Not Sch.	Autism:	Winter '91
Severe Mental Imp:	Not Sch.	Preprimary Imp:	Spring '91
Educable Mental Imp:	Winter '91	Train. Mental Imp:	Fall '91
Emotional Imp:	Winter '91	Physically Impaired:	Fall '91
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Not Sch.	Severe Multiple Imp:	Fall '91

6. **To provide local school districts with technical assistance in developing program improvement plans.**

Visual impairment:	Not Sch.	Learning Disab:	Not Sch.
Hearing Impairment:	Not Sch.	Autism:	Not Sch.
Severe Mental Imp:	Not Sch.	Preprimary Imp:	Not Sch.
Educable Mental Imp:	Winter '91	Train. Mental Imp:	Not Sch.
Emotional Imp:	Winter '91	Physically Impaired:	Not Sch.
Speech & Lang. Imp:	Not Sch.	Severe Multiple Imp:	Not Sch.

Background

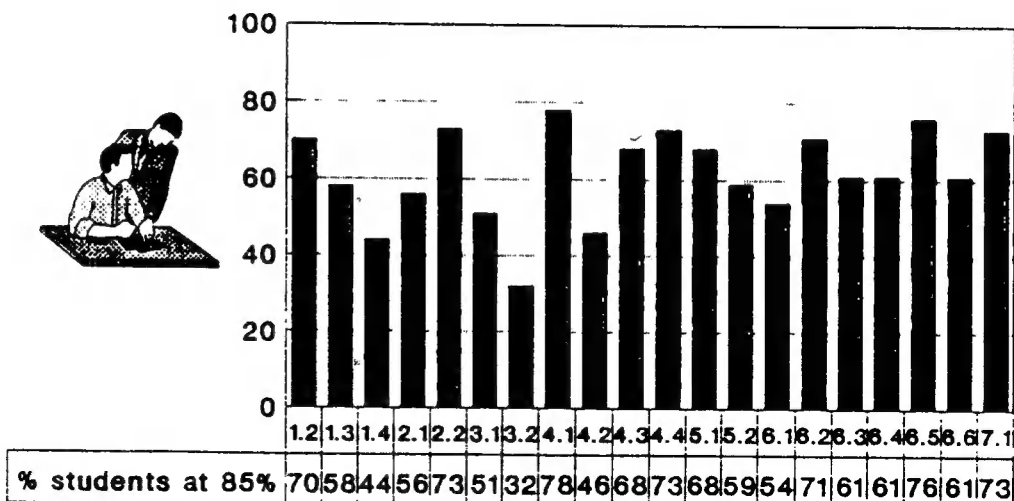
The growth of special education programs has been marked by the success of educators and parents in educating the public and branches of government about the needs of students with impairments. Special Education is also marked by the continuing and productive consideration of both the ends (outcomes) of such services and the means by which they are provided.

Special educators are currently exhibiting an increasing interest in evaluating the long term effects of the services they are providing. In the past, special educators focused mainly on input and process standards (i.e., issues relating to staff characteristics, compliance with rules and regulations, classroom materials and supplies, curriculums, enrichment activities, support services, etc.); emphasis is now being placed on outcomes or the extent to which instruction will provide benefits to students not only in school, but throughout their lives.

Several factors have influenced the shift toward outcomes. First, continued financial support may be contingent upon the demonstration of program effectiveness beyond minimal procedural (compliance) levels. Second, parents and advocates of special education programs and services are requesting information about the relationship between what is done in special education and students' personal, social, and community adjustment later in life. Third, after the tremendous growth in programs and services that occurred with passage of PL 94-142, schools themselves are beginning to reflect upon and evaluate their mission and their

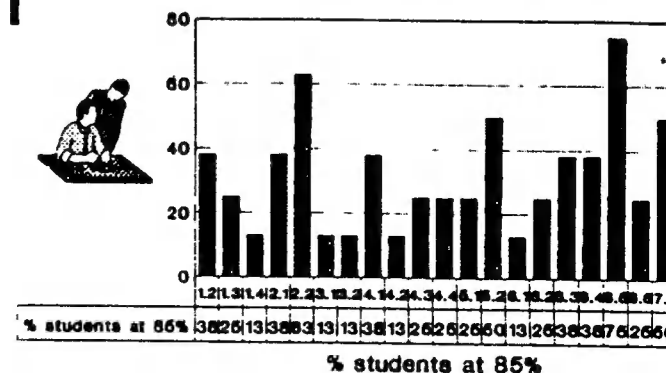
Outcomes Comparison 1991

Outcomes Assessment for Visually Impaired Students 1991



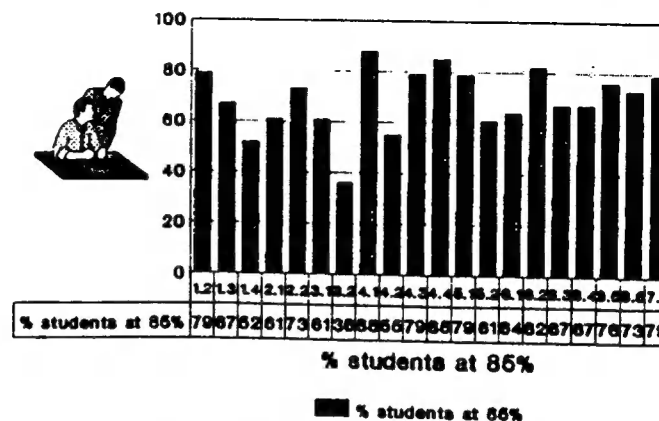
N=41, students with only vision handicap

Outcomes Assessment for Braille Readers 1991



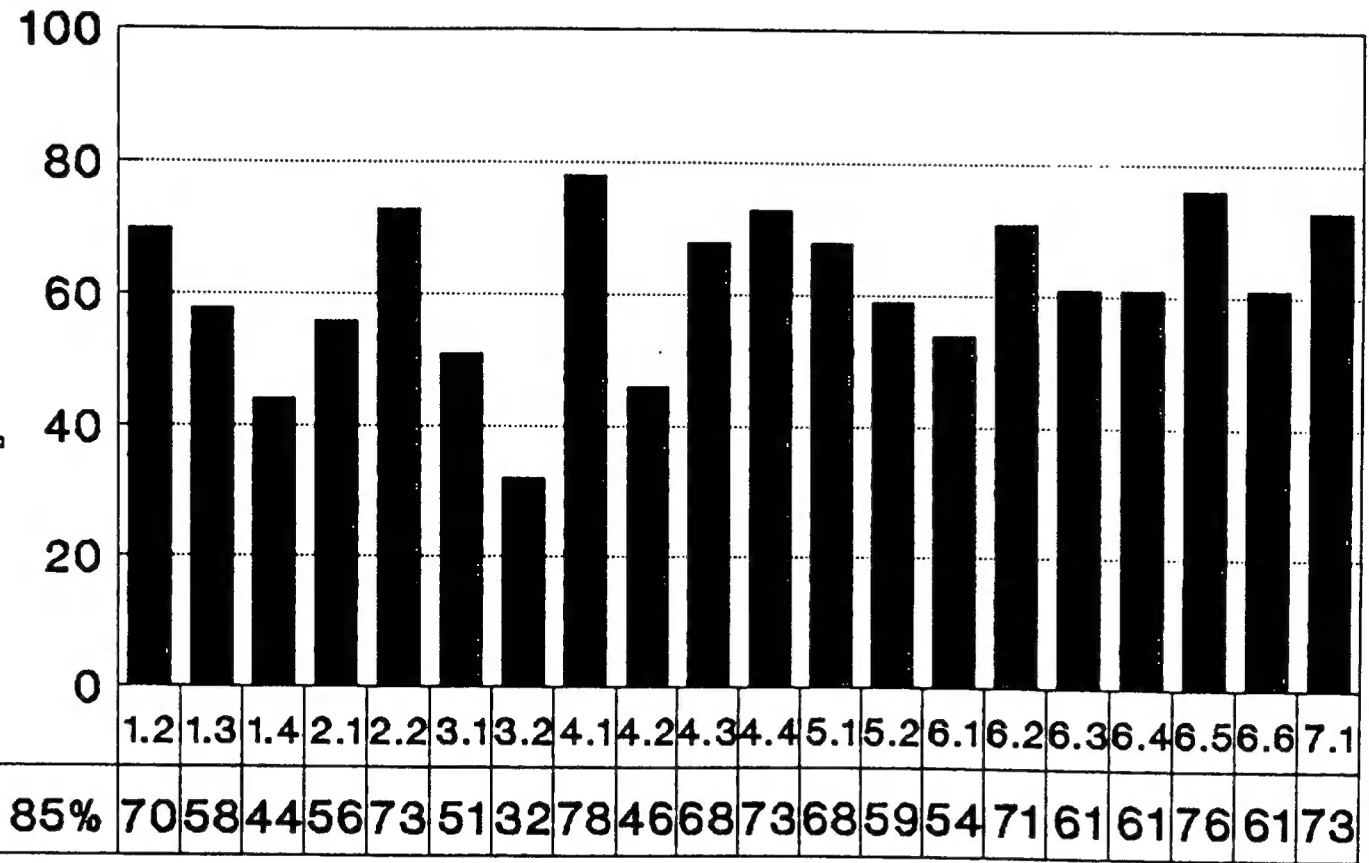
N=8, students with only vision handicap

Outcomes Assessment for Non-braille Readers 1991



N=33 students with only vision handicap

Outcomes Assessment for Visually Impaired Students 1991



% students at 85%

■ % students at 85%

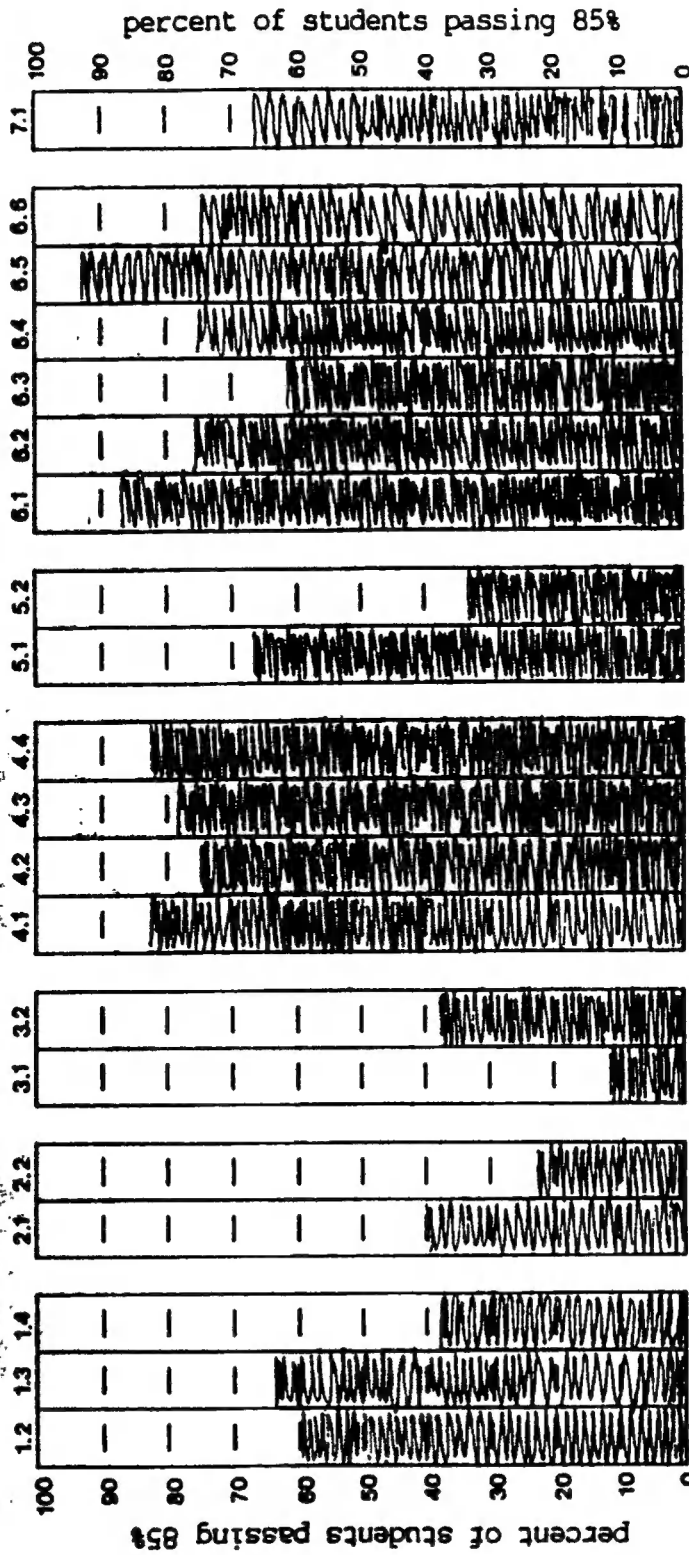
N=41, students with only vision handicap

Exit Performance Assessment for Visual Impairment

Results of Statewide Pilot Study

(n=10)

Outcomes



Score	<u>60</u>	<u>64</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>82</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>92</u>	<u>68</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>88</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>77</u>	<u>93</u>	<u>75</u>	<u>68</u>
	BA			MSA		AII		COM		PRO				PM				SIR	
	Outcome Category																		

BA - Basic Academics MSA - Maximizing Use of Sensory Abilities AII - Accessing Information in Inkprint COM - Competence in Orientation and Mobility
PRO - Productivity PM - Personal Management SIR - Social and Interpersonal Relations